From:	Jeff Robbins
To:	Simmons, Denise
Subject:	Re: Strong concerns over Council HP vote
Date:	Thursday, April 19, 2018 8:34:55 PM

Dear Ms. Simmons,

First of all, thank you very much for the thoughtful and detailed response. I appreciate understanding better the process by which matters come before the City Council.

Furthermore, I appreciate your personal research into the matter. As you probably already know, the 20th century history of the Middle East, with the sea change of the breakup of the Ottoman Empire in WWI (with the myriad implications of the foreign rulers of the Middle East changing out from non-Arab yet Muslim Turks to the European Great Powers), the horrors of WWII (with, among other things, the active participation of the "Grand Mufti of Jerusalem" in the planned slaughter of Jews in Europe), the successful establishment of the State of Israel and its acceptance as a member of the UN, the subsequent Arab assault on the newborn State of Israel, Jordan's illegal annexation of the West Bank, until 1967 when Israel took the West Bank, along with its growing population of Arab refugees from the founding of the State of Israel, leading to today's ugly and wrong impasse.

During the Grand Mufti's campaign against the Jews, the notion afoot in the Middle East was establishment of a pan-Arab union. The only people regularly called "Palestinians in those days were, ironically, Jews. I know this because I have family that lived there. The "Palestine Post" (now called the "Jerusalem Post") was a Jewish newspaper. Palestinian national consciousness was not yet a thing.

Which is not to say that Arab objections to the return of Jews to their historic homeland weren't expressed, in word, and in violent deed. But the basis for this objection needs to be studied closely, as there are different frames or narratives to interpret it. If you accept the "foreign colonial white European interloper" narrative, then the returning Jews are the victimizers, and the "poor natives" are the "brown people" being subjugated. (I am exaggerating this to highlight the poles of views that more properly can be seen a being on a more subtle spectrum, but this view is definitely a bookend on that spectrum.) But this view negates a couple of important details: 1) the view of Arabs living in Palestine at that time that they were "Arabs", meaning folks from the Arabian peninsula, and not from Palestine originally, and 2) the disparate nature of the arriving Jews, many from Arab or Muslim lands with centuries of experience living in dhimmi status as second-class (at best citizens.) The Jews who returned to Israel after their long exile experienced their return as "return", not as "interloping colonialism". You might well say "how convenient for them" and I'd understand that point of view. But I believe that intentions matter, and the Zionist movement was not a movement to subjugate others. Rather, the various Arab-instigated wars led to a large Arab population under Israeli control.

None of this history mitigates the bad situation that Palestinian Arabs find themselves in. I believe that they deserve a State of their own, living peacefully alongside Israel. (Yassir Arafat successfully inspired a uniquely Palestinian Arab national consciousness, and by 1970 or so, the pan-Arab ideal, at least for Palestinian Arabs, gave way to seeing themselves as their own people. Which is completely valid, as far as I am concerned. That year (1970) saw brutal fighting inside Jordan, as Palestinian Arabs in essence tried to seize control. Jordan struck

back forcefully, and the PLO fled to Lebanon. Whose troubles then began.)

The Israeli electorate, like the US electorate, unfortunately doesn't currently agree with me. :-) They have been consistently voting in right wing leadership, and, I feel, have hardened their hearts to the situation of Palestinian Arabs living under their military occupation on the West Bank. The experiment of withdrawing from Gaza, (whether undertaken in a legitimate good-faith way or as a cynical manipulation is open to discussion, in my opinion) has further convinced the Israeli public that withdrawal from the West Bank would only give Hamas or an Islamist extremist group like it, bent on Israel's destruction, control. So the public there apparently is accepting an ongoing military occupation as better than another Gaza situation.

All of this (of course my opinion and filled with my biases, but still, I thought you might want a quick tour of the some of the complexity) can make one impatient. Plenty of US Presidents have tried to bang heads together and change the impasse. I continue to hope for a peaceful movement of Palestinian Arabs and Israelis focused on a better future, with mutual reassurance that each group's State is a given. And I continue to believe that unilateral pressure tactics on Israel, no matter how obnoxious we might find their current government, will only produce further hardening of the heart, and make things worse, not better.

I know that what I believe isn't the only way to frame the story. But as a liberal American, I am committed to fair play, and want Israel's safety to be table stakes, along with fulfilling the aspirations of Palestinian Arabs for a State of their own.

Best,
Jeff

On Thu, Apr 19, 2018 at 3:25 PM Simmons, Denise <dsimmons@cambridgema.gov> wrote:

> Dear Mr. Robbins,
>
> Thank you for your email. So far, I have not yet seen an actual draft of the proposed resolution asking the City to cease purchasing HP equipment and supplies. I understand there's been a great deal of concern in the community about this matter – yet I must underscore that **this will only appear on the City Council's agenda if one or more City Councilors sponsor it.** We will not know if it is on the agenda until either a City Councilor publicly declares that they'll be sponsoring this (to my knowledge, this has not happened), or until the agenda is finalized by the Clerk's Office and posted online on the Thursday evening around 5:30 pm prior to the Monday City Council meeting (indeed, I had originally heard that the organization looking to have this sponsored was looking to get this placed on the agenda for April 23. It will NOT be on this coming Monday's agenda, but the organization may be recalculating as to when they think this *can* be introduced). I can, at the very least, confirm that *I* am not a sponsor of such a resolution.
>
> There have been numerous passionate op-eds, emails, and social media posts condemning the City Council for drafting this resolution, for rushing this to a vote without adequate opportunities for the public to weigh in, nor even giving people a chance to read the resolution. Some people have condemned the City Council for seemingly being on the brink of passing this resolution, or for

seemingly being on the brink of rejecting it. None of these scenarios are accurate. While I understand the passion behind this matter, I must clarify that we do not yet actually have a resolution or policy order in front of us, there has been absolutely no debate about this amongst the City Councilors, and the City Council will not have an opportunity to take this up for consideration *unless and until* a resolution is sponsored by at least one of us and introduced at a public meeting. At this point, I am not yet certain if such a resolution will be introduced or not.

I appreciate your reaching out and sharing your views on this. I am currently reading up on this issue to be better informed, I am reviewing all the emails and letters coming in about this issue, and I am reaching out to our representatives in Congress to seek their input on an issue that is more international than municipal in scope. Should this matter end up on before the City Council – either on April 30 or at a later date – I will look forward to engaging in a thoughtful discussion and debate with my colleagues on the Council and then seeing how to best resolve this matter in a way that allows everyone to feel they have had a fair chance to be heard. Thank you.

E. Denise Simmons

From: Jeff Robbins <jeffr@livedata.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 19, 2018 3:35 PM
To: City Council

Subject: Strong concerns over Council HP vote
Hi. Quick background: My name is Jeffrey Robbins. I was born in Cambridge in 1961. I attended Harvard and raised 3 children in Cambridge. My younger 2 attended CRLS. I run a software company, LiveData, located at 810 Memorial Drive in Cambridge.

My middle child, Eitan Stern-Robbins, passed away 5 years ago as a freshman in college. He loved his city.

I can only imagine what Eitan would say about his city taking a vote on such a complex topic affecting the Jewish people, a part of his identity, with so little public discussion preceding the vote.

As a member of Youth Involvement subcommittee of the Cambridge Kids Council, Eitan was group spokesperson at a State House hearing regarding a lower voting age for local elections. If he could now speak, I am confident he would point out the need for serious public discussion prior to taking any action, however "symbolic" that could negatively impact the security of Jews living in Israel.

Eitan passed away before the Boston Marathon bombing, in which the captain of Eitan's CRLS wrestling team shamefully partipated. Eitan had several Muslim friends and wanted

only peace for all.

While the plight of Palestinian Arabs isn't solely attributable to Islamic extremism, or Arab rejectionism, to ignore these factors in understanding the electoral success of Israel's right wing is to remain part of the problem rather than the intention to be part of the solution.

BDS has been a deceptive movement, ambiguous about its commitment to a secure Jewish State. Even Norman Finklestein, a staunch academic critic of Israeli policies and ongoing role in the Arab-Israeli conflict, has distanced himself from BDS.

https://newrepublic.com/article/122257/unpopular-man-norman-finkelstein-comes-out-against-bds-movement

I strongly urge the Council to "put the brakes on" , and allow a fair and appropriate democratic public process, with full transparency, before taking a vote that would represent a betrayal of so many things we hold dear about a city that is inclusive, progressive, and democratic.

Sincerely,
Jeff Robbins
(617) 571-5739